

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC SPEAKING SESSION
MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2014
6:30 PM**

ATTENDANCE: Council members: Brannelly, Torres, Banta, Taylor-Moye, Halstead, Swain, McCarthy, Austin, Lyons, Vizzo-Paniccia, McBride-Lee, Salter, DeJesus, Castillo, Martinez, Feliciano, Paoletto

ABSENT: Council members: Marella, Martinez-Walker, Holloway

Council President McCarthy called the public speaking session to order at 6:40 pm.

The city clerk took the roll call and announced there was a quorum.

Please go to [www. SoundviewTV.org/Bridgeport](http://www.SoundviewTV.org/Bridgeport) to view or listen to the detailed comments that the speakers below addressed to the City Council on April 7, 2014.

THE FOLLOWING NAMED PERSON HAS REQUESTED PERMISSION TO ADDRESS THE CITY COUNCIL ON MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2014 AT 6:30 P.M., IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, 45 LYON TERRACE, BRIDGEPORT, CT.

NAME

SUBJECT

Ethan Book
144 Coleman Street
Bridgeport, CT 06604

The matter of the late Adelaida Coriano.

❖ *Statement may be submitted to the city clerk's office – or go to [www. SoundviewTV.org/Bridgeport](http://www.SoundviewTV.org/Bridgeport) to view or listen to the detailed comments*

State Rep. Jack Hennessy
556 Savoy Street
Bridgeport, CT 06606

The Ox Brook Flood Control Project.

State Representative Hennessy spoke about the Ox Brook Flood Control Project. He said he was happy to hear that the project is moving forward according to his talk with the engineer. He mentioned that Council member Lyons was pleased about the matter, noting that it has taken almost two years to come together on the bonding issue. He further commented that communication has been open and ongoing to move things along. He stated that he would like to work together with Council member Lyons. He relayed that he received a letter from Council member Torres regarding the solar panels project and he was glad that he was included in the conversation, noting that he replied back. He expressed that he would like to see more working as a team.

He further commented about council members working for the city and he relayed that some legislation may be in place regarding this issue in the near future.

Cecil C. Young
99 Carroll Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06607

Follow-up on unjust termination status.

Mr. Young stated that he was disappointed in the city attorney and Labor Relations for not responding to his request regarding his unjust termination. He stressed that it's a shame that he had to obtain an affidavit to request the information. He said the matter wasn't about money, it's about right and wrong. He mentioned that the issue is similar to bullying, in that his concerns are constantly ignored. He commented that public officials are here to work on behalf of the public and he repeated that it's a shame that he can't get any resolution to the matter and he keeps being ignored. He questioned if the city council really cares about their constituents.

He further spoke about people that owe back taxes to emphasize that Bridgeport residents pay the highest taxes in the state and the threat of imposing liens is wrong. He noted that for those that do pay taxes regularly are ignored when they come to speak before the council, noting that the Mayor's oath to do the right thing isn't being upheld as it should be.

He went on to speak about police protection that isn't always sufficient and sometimes used for the right reasons in the wrong way...Council President McCarthy informed Mr. Young that his time to speak was up, but he strongly continued to voice his comments about not getting justice.

John Marshall Lee
30 Beacon Street
Bridgeport, CT 06605

City Finances.

Good evening, City Council President McCarthy, Council members, and Bridgeport public.....

Tonight is a special night. The UCONN Huskies an underdog at many points this season has fought its way to the NCAA finals. I will be viewing and many of you will too. There is a lesson for us in Bridgeport I believe. People like underdogs who fight against significant odds. Kind of the American way, you know? And people learn lessons from the experience, too.

What has allowed UCONN to play tonight? Several things obviously but I will mention two: tenacious defense played for 40 minutes of each game, without let up and foul shooting that is off the charts that means when their players are fouled, the points get in the basket 90% of the time anyway.

Why do I mention this tonight to you? Well the taxpayer in Bridgeport is an underdog whether you realize it or not. Twenty members of this City Council have not played a full court press about budgets for years. It is as if you follow the coaching of the opposition, which in this case is the administration. And in the course of being on court, you foul the taxpayer. Let me explain.....

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I am talking to 20 Council members but the following comments apply to 12 of you who were here last year. You have a stipend problem. You have an ordinance that offers reimbursements. You took it under study, were concerned about the income tax responsibility, etc. You tabled the matter, changed the actual process and are acting without legal authorization. And the City Finance office is overseer? Did you realize that? Look at your Agendas, at your minutes, at your decisions.... You are sitting in the three second area, in the paint and need to be called on it. In a ball game, you would lose possession of the ball. It's a turnover. Do you want to know what the IRS would say about this?

But let's look at your new unauthorized process where you sign a statement once a year outlining do's and don'ts two of which are NO POLITICAL PAYMENTS and NO CHARITABLE PAYMENTS and then you get to use your debit card. The debit cards do not show the purpose of your payments, so when a Council person has over 50 Stop and Shop charges in a year, what is a curious taxpayer to make of that? No purpose is demanded as explanation by your process. Hear the whistle?

And last year in the DRAFT final month report of June 2013, look at the Legislative Department, your Council budget. This is money under your control. What do we see? The DRAFT report shows that \$5,722 of funds was spent under Other Services (Line Item 56180) in 12 months. Five months later when we received the FINAL report (the first time a FINAL audited report of 12 months of revenue and expense was issued), Other Services (Line item 56180) had swelled to \$31,622 although the funds in question had actually been purchased in June 2013. We have found that 55 checks were requested from that account totaling \$31,850 to go to church and 501c3 organizations. That is illegal. You hid these items. That is taxpayer money spent with no rules and no votes. You did not meet the requirements you observe for Federal HUD CDBG funds. Why not? Should we ask these organizations to return the money? Lower our taxes. Let people make their own contributions. It has nothing to do with the recipient organizations. It has to do with your behavior. Cut the stipend annual total from \$180,000 to \$120,000 or less. Cut your Other Services budget from \$93,500 to \$10,000. You don't use it anyway.

You are not a good team on defense of taxpayer money. You act as if it is your own money to spend, here and in all of your Council process. We must blow the whistle on that behavior. You foul us. It shows that you either do not know the rules or choose not to follow them. This is lawless. It must stop.

When the budget is presented tonight, how can the taxpayers of Bridgeport trust you in your work? What evidence of OPEN, ACCOUNTABLE and TRANSPARENT behavior exists when you break your own rules and proceed to hide what you have done? Our hope is in the eight new people on the Council. Reform. Open your Committee meetings. Your rules prevent public input and you do not listen. Reform. Your game is not entertaining. You are not helping the underdogs who pay taxes. Time will tell.

John Marshall Lee
30 Beacon Street
Bridgeport, CT 06605

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- ❖ *The following speaker signed up to address the city council prior to the public speaking session: Statement may be submitted to the city clerk's office – or go to **www. SoundviewTV.org/Bridgeport** to view or listen to the detailed comments*

David Walker

Mr. Walker spoke stated that he was the president of Citizens Working for a Better Bridgeport. He commented about the situation of Bridgeport's finances and the rising tax rate increase.

The public speaking session ended at 7:10 pm.

CITY OF BRIDGEPORT

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2014

7:00 PM

City Council Chambers, City Hall - 45 Lyon Terrace

Bridgeport, Connecticut

ATTENDANCE: Council members: Brannelly, Torres, Banta, Taylor-Moye, Halstead, Swain, McCarthy, Austin, Lyons, Vizzo-Paniccia, McBride-Lee, Salter, DeJesus, Castillo, Martinez, Feliciano, Marella, Paoletto, Martinez-Walker, Holloway

Mayor Finch called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm.

Prayer - Council member Banta offered the prayer.

Pledge of Allegiance - Council member Feliciano led the pledge of allegiance.

Roll Call - the City Clerk took the roll call and announced there was a quorum.

ADDED:

Mayoral Proclamation: In Recognition of the work of the Public Health Professionals of the Bridgeport Health Department during National Public Health Week, April 7–13, 2014.

Mayor Finch, Council President McCarthy and Council members: Taylor-Moye, Lyons, Paoletto, Martinez and Torres came forward to present the citation.

Mayor Finch expressed that the public health department does many things that most of us take for granted. He acknowledged Kristen Bay-Horton and the other health department representatives present to accept the citation – *he read the proclamation that highlighted the beneficial health initiatives that the Bridgeport Health Department implemented for the purpose of addressing varied health symptoms early on.*

Kristen Bay-Horton, Director of the Bridgeport Health Department recognized the staff that she said works full time on a daily basis to address health issues that arise in the city.

City Council Citation: In Recognition of the work of the Public Health Professionals of the Bridgeport Health Department during National Public Health Week, April 7–13, 2014.

Council President McCarthy stated that the city council was involved in the screening initiative and they were able to find out what their numbers were to make healthy decisions for themselves. He commented that it helped them to take proactive steps in monitoring their health – *he read the citation. And a group picture was taken.*

Mayoral Proclamation: In Recognition of the Bridgeport Central High School Boys Basketball Team for Winning the “2014” State Class LL Basketball Championship.

Mayor Finch greeted each player that was present. He expressed that they were very proud of the team that has been at the top of their game all year long. He further expressed that the team’s accomplishment promotes a feeling of great pride in the city and he highlighted that there has only been one loss, noting that the team has become a legend in the city – *to applause.* He acknowledged the team’s coach, noting that he’s done an excellent job coaching the team – *he presented a certificate to each player that was present.*

City Council Citation: In Recognition of the Bridgeport Central High School Boys Basketball Team for Winning the “2014” State Class LL Basketball Championship.

Council President McCarthy expressed congratulations on behalf of the city council. He commented that sometimes it’s forgotten how wonderful things happen in the Bridgeport. He congratulated the team to say that they are awesome and that the city council is very proud – *to applause. He read the names of all the team players and he presented a citation to each player that was present.*

One of the team members thanked the Mayor and the entire city council for the citation. He also thanked the team coaches and expressed that it was an honor and privilege to receive the citation – *a group picture was taken.*

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL:

Approval of City Council Minutes: March 3, 2014

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ-WALKER SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

COMMUNICATIONS TO BE REFERRED TO COMMITTEES:

- 63-13** Communication from WPCA re: Financial Report/Annual Audit pursuant to Ordinance Section 13.04.420, **ACCEPTED AND MADE PART OF THE RECORD.**
- 64-13** Communication from Labor Relations and Benefits Administration re: Proposed Agreement with The Hartford Life and Accident Insurance Company for a Group Retiree Insurance Plan for Medicare-Eligible Retirees of the City and Board of Education Employees, referred to Contracts Committee.
- 66-13** Communication from Mayor re: Proposed General Fund Budget for Fiscal Year 2014-2015, referred to Budget and Appropriations Committee.
- 67-13** Communication from Labor Relations and Benefits Administration re: Proposed Collective Bargaining Agreement with Fire Fighters Local 834 for the Period of July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2014, referred to Contracts Committee.
- 68-13** Communication from Central Grants re: Grant Submission: State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection for an Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG), referred to Public Safety and Transportation Committee.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO MOVED TO REFER COMMUNICATIONS TO BE REFERRED TO COMMITTEES**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER AUSTIN SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

RESOLUTIONS TO BE REFERRED TO BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, ETC.:

- 62-13** Resolution presented by Council Members Martinez and Feliciano re: Proposed Request that the corner of Kossuth Street and Pulaski Street Intersection adjacent to 401 Kossuth Street be named "St. John Paul II Corner" with signage being erected by April 27, 2014 to mark it in Polish as being "Św. Jan Pawel II Corner", referred to Public Safety & Transportation Committee.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO MOVED TO REFER RESOLUTIONS TO BE REFERRED TO BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, ETC.**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER AUSTIN SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

MATTERS TO BE ACTED UPON (CONSENT CALENDAR):

Mayor Finch asked if there were any items to be removed from the consent calendar.

Council member Vizzo-Paniccia requested to remove item ***51-13** Public Safety and Transportation Committee Report re: Donation of a Surplus Fire Truck to the Dominican Republic.

Council member Paoletto requested to remove ***52-13** Miscellaneous Matters Committee Report re: Refund of Excess Payments.

The city clerk read the remaining consent calendar items into the record:

***28-13** Public Safety and Transportation Committee Report re: Grant Submission: 2013 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) for Fire Station Alerting System (#14436).

***29-13** Public Safety and Transportation Committee Report re: Grant Submission: 2013 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) for SCBA Cylinders and Assemblies (#14345).

***46-13** Public Safety and Transportation Committee Report re: Appointment of Rocco Guarnieri (D) to the Fire Commission.

***51-13** Public Safety and Transportation Committee Report re: Donation of a Surplus Fire Truck to the Dominican Republic. - *removed*

***57-13** Public Safety and Transportation Committee Report re: Donation of a Fire Boat to the Town of Fairfield.

***27-13(PHO)** Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee Report re: Public Hearing Ordered for April 21, 2014: re Disposition and Redevelopment of City-Owned Properties to Achievement First Bridgeport Academy Elementary School.

***35-13** Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee Report re: Grant Submission: National Fish & Wildlife Foundation for 2013 Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Competitive Grant Program.

***36-13** Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee Report re: Grant Submission: State Department of Economic & Community Development Special Act Grant for the Black Rock Business District Improvement Project.

*43-13 Miscellaneous Matters Committee Report re: Appointment of Carlos A. Moreno (D) to the Planning & Zoning Commission.

*52-13 Miscellaneous Matters Committee Report re: Refund of Excess Payments. - *removed*

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** **COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO MOVED TO APPROVE**
** **COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY SECONDED**
** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mayor Finch returned to item *51-13 Public Safety and Transportation Committee Report re: Donation of a Surplus Fire Truck to the Dominican Republic. - *removed*

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** **COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY MOVED TO APPROVE**
** **COUNCIL MEMBER MARELLA SECONDED**

Council member Vizzo-Paniccia stated that this will be the third fire truck that has been donated to the Dominican Republic. She stressed her concern as to why the fire truck is going to a third world country and why isn't it being donated to our own country in the United States. She stated that she wouldn't vote in favor of the item.

Council member Torres questioned if the fire truck being donated had any value and whether it should be put up for sale instead. He stressed that it was a budget concern related to any source or revenue that was available.

** **MOTION PASSED WITH EIGHTEEN VOTES IN FAVOR AND TWO VOTES IN OPPOSITION (COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA and COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES)**

MATTERS TO BE ACTED UPON:

45-13 Miscellaneous Matters Committee Report re: State Reimbursement of Low and Moderate Income Housing for the Grand List of 2012.

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** **COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY MOVED TO APPROVE**
** **COUNCIL MEMBER MARELLA SECONDED**

Council member Vizzo-Paniccia stated that the item didn't pass in committee and that's why it was on the agenda. She requested that the Director of Finance relay the information related to the item.

Kelly Lenz, Director of Finance stated that the program began in 1973; it was done between the state and local housing projects to allow affordable and sufficient housing to low to moderate income individuals. She explained that every year they receive notification from the state to provide inspection reports and a tax assessment on the property and

then the city receives reimbursement. However, they can't be reimbursed without showing abatement of the properties.

Council member Halstead mentioned the Sycamore Condominiums \$265k abatement. He asked what portion of that the city will get back. Ms. Lenz replied that they generally receive 100% of the tax back, which applies to profit and loss; but she wasn't sure what part they will get back yet. She reiterated that the matter dates back to 1973.

Council member Torres asked if the item related to the same six properties that participated in the program. Ms. Lenz said that was correct, except for the two properties that aren't participating. Council member Torres asked if any other properties can opt in this year. Ms. Lenz said that someone from OPED will have to explain how they were set up. She reiterated again that the program was structured back in 1973.

Council member Swain commented that she had a concern about signing another forty year contract with low income housing projects. She urged that they look into the contract in the future before signing for another forty years, to make sure that the city is covered as far as the reimbursement.

Council member Halstead asked if the owner pays the taxes on the property. Ms. Lenz said that depends on the assessed value of the property. Council member Halstead mentioned the fair market price in relation to Section-8, noting that it's related to state money. He said he felt that this results in owners receiving subsidies from three different sources. Ms. Lenz clarified that this is the last year for the forty year contract. Council member Halstead noted that he would follow up with her regarding the tax formula. *Council member Halstead began to make some comments unrelated to the topic regarding the last council member election, when members of the council interjected to say that the comments were inappropriate; he discontinued speaking..*

Council member Vizzo-Paniccia pointed out that if the item was tabled tonight, a lien will be applied to the property and it will affect financing. Ms. Lenz said if the item wasn't approved, there is a risk that the properties could be sold.

Council member Swain questioned how they can make sure that the next contract that comes forward can be submitted for review before the city council has to vote on it. Council President McCarthy responded that the contract will be referred to committee and they can take as much time as needed to review it.

Council member McBride-Lee agreed that if they are already obligated to a contract, then they should move forward. However, she said she would also like to review any future contracts thoroughly before they come before the council.

Mayor Finch explained that the state allows the city to do this so that the rents can be kept low. The stated makes a deal with the entity that if they exempt them, the rent will be low. The city then sends the report that it's still affordable housing and it has been assessed at the designated amount. He emphasized that the point is to bring out as much taxes as possible.

Council member Swain asked what department the Contracts Committee needed to contact to read up and review contracts. Mayor Finch replied that they don't know when a contract will come up again, but he suggested that the Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED) should be contacted.

Council member Vizzo-Paniccia stated that the Miscellaneous Matters Committee members were notified that the item would be on the agenda and there was sufficient time to allow them to ask questions.

Council member Torres stated that the points made by Council member Halstead were relevant regarding the matter of certain entities receiving what could be considered duplicate payments from other sources. He stressed that they don't want to perpetuate a cash cow situation.

Council member Martinez reminded everyone that the housing in question is for seniors and handicap persons. She urged her colleagues to vote on the item to send the message that they want to continue working with the poor seniors.

Council member Paoletto commented about his colleague that previously spoke. He emphasized that first and foremost, the new and old council members should attend committee meetings to ask questions. He went on to say that as far as the alleged illegal business practices as suggested by Council member Halstead was disagreed with, because all transactions have to be authorized and approved at the state level. In addition, he stressed that he felt Council member Halstead's inappropriate comments regarding other matters, such as the election; distracts from other important issues that need to be addressed that affect residents.

Council member Holloway agreed with Council member Paoletto in that Council member Halstead's comments were inappropriate.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

65-13 Special Committee Report re: (Ref. #161-12) Discontinuance of Pembroke Street (South of Ann Street) and Hough Avenue: Approved on November 4, 2013.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO MOVED TO APPROVE**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Other business:

Mayor Finch gave a brief update regarding the budget. He acknowledged the co-chairs (Brannelly and Marella) of the Budget & Appropriation Committee to say that the budget process generally takes up a lot of time.

He highlighted key budget items that will be addressed when the process begins:

- *Raising children in Bridgeport*
- *Making the best choices for the citizens of Bridgeport*

Council member Brannelly stated that she reached out to the council members about the upcoming budget schedule, so that they will be able to efficiently work through the budget. She noted the long nights of meetings that will be involved. She commented that it will be crucial for everyone to attend the meetings as much as possible, noting that committee and council member participation is critical to learn as much as possible. *The Budget & Appropriation Committee meetings will be published on Tuesday, April 8, 2014.*

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER DeJESUS MOVED TO ADJOURN
** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Graham
Telesco Secretarial Services